



**State of Wisconsin**  
**Department of Public Instruction**  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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**Burmaster convenes High School Task Force**

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster convened her High School Task Force today to ensure that Wisconsin high school students continue to graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education, the high-skills workplace, and as citizens of our global economy.

“The demands on high schools and expectations of high school graduates have never been greater,” Burmaster said. “As we prepare students for the 21st century and a knowledge-based economy, we must ensure that our high school graduates leave school with a strong foundation for success.”

The state superintendent invited 70 education advocates and leaders—including students, parents, and high school principals—along with business and community representatives from across the state to attend Monday’s inaugural session. Chaired by JoAnne Brandes, executive vice president, chief administrative officer, and general counsel for JohnsonDiversey Inc., and Ryan Champeau, principal of Waukesha North High School, Burmaster’s task force will look at various local initiatives aimed at redesigning or transforming the high school experience, enhancing student learning and engagement, and strengthening the alignment of high school with postsecondary education and workforce needs.

“Wisconsin high schools have traditionally done a good job preparing young people for whatever future they choose,” Burmaster said. “But we must never rely solely on our past accomplishments to meet the ever-changing needs of students.”

Burmaster noted that much has been accomplished in the past year to increase student academic learning and close the achievement gap. Highlights include a high school graduation rate of nearly 92 percent, state graduates earning the top score on the ACT college admissions test for the 10th year, efforts in Milwaukee to bring together 10 stakeholder groups to improve student attendance, work by her Rural Advisory Council that has focused statewide attention on keeping rural schools and communities strong, recognition of the state’s international education efforts through the prestigious Goldman Sachs

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Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education, and involvement by 48 percent of students in extracurricular, local service, or service-learning activities.

In the 2003-04 school year, Wisconsin had 290,219 students enrolled in ninth through 12th grade, attending school in approximately 500 public high schools. Those high schools ranged in size from 35 students at Washington Island High School to more than 2,300 students each at Fond du Lac High School and Tremper High School in Kenosha.

“Planning for the future of high schools is a national imperative. By working together on this task force, we have the opportunity to identify and share ‘what works’ and ‘what’s promising’ in our high schools as well as current research on improving educational outcomes for our graduates,” Burmaster said. “We must create learning environments that work for all of our children.”

The High School Task Force will

- identify strategies to raise achievement, close the gap, and promote postsecondary success and citizenship for all students;
- embrace the strengths of high schools and identify where change is needed;
- examine new models of student learning and engagement;
- rethink the roles and relationships that frame high schools; and
- advance best practices that promote equity, quality, and accountability in the high school experience.

In addition to beginning the work of her High School Task Force, Burmaster will join Gov. Jim Doyle Feb. 26-27 for the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, which is part of the National Governor’s Association Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. Wisconsin is among about half the states in the nation that are working to improve high schools.

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